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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 003412

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STATE FOR EB/IFD/OIA; EAP/MTS
STATE PASS USTR FOR BWEISEL AND DKATZ
STATE PASS USAID
TREASURY FOR OASIA FOR AJEWELL
USDOC FOR 4430/ITA/MAC/DBISBEE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECPS](#) [EINT](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [APEC](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE BROADBAND: NARROWING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

SUMMARY

¶1. Private companies are partnering with Philippine's network of 5,443 public secondary schools to install computer laboratories by ¶2010. Over 800 schools have been connected to date, and 200 more will enjoy the benefits of these labs by December, 2006. A USAID program has contributed hardware, software, training, and connectivity to 330 high schools in the conflict-affected area of Mindanao. End Summary.

HISTORY OF COMPUTER LABS

¶2. The 45-year old Ayala Foundation, founded to improve the quality of life of Filipinos, launched its Youth Tech program to install computers with internet connectivity in schools in 2000. Twenty-eight private corporations banded together in 2001 to form ConnectEd. By the end of 2004, 170 high schools had internet connectivity compliments of Youth Tech, and ConnectEd had touched another 80 schools for a total of 323 high schools with internet access.

¶3. The Department of Trade and Industry started the Personal Computers for Public Schools (PCPS) program in 2004, aimed to increase computer literacy. The Japanese donated computers to the Philippines via a government-to-government to place computer labs in 2,096 public schools.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP UPS THE ACCESS

¶4. Government and private corporations' efforts were fused and expanded in 2005 under the banner of "Gearing up Internet Literacy Access for Students" (GILAS). Senator Manuel Roxas, the force behind PCPS when he was the Trade and Industry Secretary, and President and CEO of the Ayala Corporation, Jaime A. Ayala II, signed on as co-chairs of GILAS. The vision of the project is to install computer labs in all of the Philippines' high schools by ¶2010. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo endorsed this initiative and committed her team to working with GILAS for the program's successful outcome.

¶5. Dell Chairman Michael Dell inaugurated the GILAS program in Pasay City East High School near Manila in March 2006. Dell has donated a total of seven computers and provided training to high school students and teachers. Dell employees 300 individuals in its new Manila call center, which will eventually reach 1,400 employees.

¶16. In a meeting with Ramon Sales, Chairman of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology, told EconOfs that the GRP earmarked 270 million pesos (1 USD = 52 Philippine Pesos) for this project in the 2005-06 budget. Over 800 high schools throughout the country are connected, with an additional 200 expected on-line by year-end. Each lab contains 20 computers; 15 dedicated for student use and five for the teachers and administration.

USAID PROGRAMS FURTHER SUPPORT CONNECTIVITY

¶17. USAID's Computer Literacy and Internet Connection (CLIC) has complimented the GILAS program in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and other conflict-affected areas of Mindanao by introducing computer and internet education into 330 high schools. CLIC will provide 270 more schools with up to ten computers, software, a printer, a local area network, and satellite or microwave-based internet connections.

¶18. USAID has partnered with several U.S. companies, including Microsoft, Intel, IBM, and Cisco Systems to provide hardware, software, and training at significantly reduced prices for these Mindanao high schools. To date, 9,000 teachers and 300,000 students have benefited from CLIC. USAID's arrangement with the Ayala Foundation enabled internet connections for 45 high schools in this province with computers from the GILAS program.

COMMENT

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¶19. These ambitious programs are a good start to help compensate for poorly stocked, out-of-date school libraries, promote more educational standardization, and help with computer literacy to enable high school graduates with their job searches. Corporations seeking to start or expand call centers in the Philippines, as Dell has done, will be likely supporters of the GILAS program. The USG's commitment to supply and connect Mindanao high schools add to this tremendous momentum.

JONES